

# MHR *Connections*

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## 2010 Human Rights Award Recipients Announced

The Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission proudly announce the recipients of this year's Human Rights Awards.

This year's Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba focuses on an individual or a group who has advanced human rights through the arts.

The panel found the entrants so powerful, it was difficult to make a decision. So difficult in fact, that a tie for the Commitment Award was declared.

The 2010 Recipients of the 2010 Human Rights Commitment Award are: Ernesto Griffith and Winston Moxam of Winesto Films Incorporated for their truly magnificent film, 'Billy' and, The Manitoba Theatre for Young People for the achievement of promoting human rights and social transformation for almost 30 years.

The 2010 recipient for the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award is the Leadership Team of Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network for their simply amazing "Free Hug Day Campaign."

To support these groups and individuals, join them on December 7, 2010 (note that the date has changed). The recipients will be honoured guests at a reception in the Manitoba Legislative Dining Room, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$20.00 and available by contacting the Manitoba Human Rights Commission at 945-3007 or [hrc@gov.mb.ca](mailto:hrc@gov.mb.ca).



*Me to We leader Anto Chan works with a group of students who lean towards "visionary" personality traits.*

## *Me to We* leaders inspire students at Conference

Snow and the threat of snow could not dampen the enthusiasm of the students attending the tenth annual Manitoba Human Rights Youth conferences in Winnipeg and Brandon this month.

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### The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

#### Overdue endorsement welcomed

Back in September 2007, The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, along with human rights commissions across the country, social justice groups, legal experts and First Nations leaders, urged the Canadian Government to withdraw its opposition to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finally on November 12, 2010, Canada joined other countries in supporting this UN Declaration and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Aboriginal people.

The United Nations Declaration describes the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples. It sets out a number of principles that can guide a cooperative relationship between Aboriginal people and governments. These principles include equality, partnership, good faith and mutual respect.

For example, Article 2 states that "Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity." Article 10 states that "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories."

While the Declaration is not legally binding, endorsing it is a significant step forward in strengthening relations with Aboriginal peoples. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission strongly supports the principles outlined in this document and regards all United Nations declarations as additional tools to use in both our complaint process and in the promotion of human rights.

In a news release issued earlier this month the present Minister of Indian Affairs John Duncan is quoted as saying, "We understand and respect the importance of this United Nations Declaration to Indigenous peoples in Canada and worldwide. Canada has endorsed the Declaration to further reconcile and strengthen our relationship with Aboriginal peoples in Canada."

Although it took three years to come to that conclusion, it is now time to congratulate the Government of Canada on its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We hope that this movement continues towards the promotion and protection of human and fundamental rights for everyone.

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The Learn to Lead Conference featured interactive workshops; Scenes from a Hat where students improvised human rights scenarios and Law and Order: MHRC which guided students through the human rights complaint system. Another winning workshop was Two Moccasins – Two Worlds, featuring Aboriginal comedian/actor/ writer Ryan McMahon. His powerful personal story empowered students to understand their past, present and future and left them wanting to dream.

*For many students the rock, paper, scissors exercise was the exciting part of the day.*

And then there was the full afternoon session with the *Me to We* leadership team. It all began with everyone pairing up and taking part in a 'rock, paper, scissors' competition that had the students cheering on the person they had lost to. In the end only two remained with nearly two hundred students and teachers cheering, stomping and supporting their person.

## Hate message case going to the Supreme Court of Canada

A Saskatchewan human rights case is heading to the Supreme Court of Canada. "The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is pleased that the Supreme Court of Canada has granted it leave to appeal the decision of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in the Whatcott case," said Chief Commissioner Judge David Arnot. In 2005, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal found that William Whatcott conveyed messages of hatred against gays and lesbians when he distributed flyers in Regina and Saskatoon which, among other things, referred to homosexual men as "sodomites" and "pedophiles," referred to same-sex relationships as "filthy," and urged people to lobby government to prevent homosexual persons from working as teachers.

"This case is about the power of words to maim," said Chief Commissioner Arnot.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code protects both the right to freedom of expression and the right of persons and groups to be free from discrimination and hate propaganda. "The Code asks us to protect both rights," said Chief Commissioner Arnot.

"When we decide whether to pursue a complaint of hate propaganda, we must assess whether the facts of the case fit within the Code's very narrow prohibition against extreme speech which will expose marginalized groups to hatred or incite others to discriminate against them."

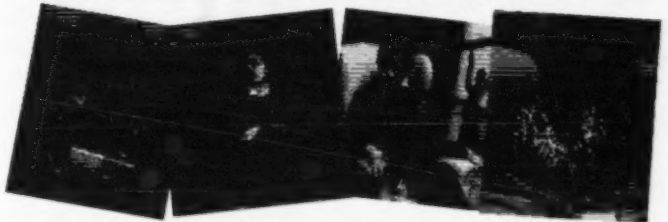
Chief Commissioner Arnot noted that it has been 20 years since the Supreme Court of Canada last ruled on the appropriate balance between freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination. "In this appeal, we will be asking the court for guidance on where the line should be drawn between extreme speech and the right of citizens to express their beliefs freely."

Next, the Me to We leaders gave the students a series of questions, which determined 'personality types'. The students then joined their 'personality' group: Warrior, nurturer, visionary, and analytical thinker. Together with their group leaders students learned how to be a leader using the qualities of their personality type.

In the end, the students described the session as "exciting, fun, motivational, crazy and awesome." When asked what she would do when she returned to school one student stated, "Be a leader." Another one said, "Dream and never give up."

The conferences attracted 200 students and teachers in Winnipeg and nearly 100 the following day in Brandon.

## MHRC staff take part in Discrimination Prevention Forum



*From left to right: Pamela Roberts Investigator, Isha Khan Legal Counsel, Dianna Scarth Executive Director, and retired teacher Judy George.*

The Canadian Human Rights Commission's 2010 Discrimination Prevention Forum – Circle of Awareness attracted 200 guests and presenters from around the country. Among the presenters were Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Executive Director, Dianna Scarth, Legal Counsel Isha Khan, Investigator Pam Roberts and a friend of the Commission and loyal youth conference participant, retired teacher Judy George.

Ms Scarth, Ms Roberts and Ms George presented at the "Educating Youth on their Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace." It was an opportunity to showcase the Commission's youth initiatives, including the youth conferences and the Commission's new youth website, Manitoba Class Action.

The session started with a game of Jeopardy with a twist; all the answers, are human rights questions.

Ms George, who was a teacher in The Pas spoke about how the Commission's youth conferences had influenced both her and her students. She told the audience of two students who had taken what they learned from the conference and went on to hold workshops for younger students. One of those students is now attending university.

At the Legal Updates Plenary Session, Ms Khan spoke of two recent human rights cases. The first was a Manitoba case in which the ground for discrimination was having a criminal record. The second was a case in British Columbia about the use of comparator groups in the discrimination analysis of a disabled student.

The keynote speaker was Chief Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. He said he was totally committed to human rights and that "our quest as a people is to live free and decent lives with peace and dignity."